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Space Shuttle Discovery Returns Home After Final Mission

NASA

MAR 09, 2011

RELEASE 11-068

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – Space shuttle Discovery and its six-astronaut crew ended a 13-day journey of more than five million miles and concluded the spacecraft's illustrious 27-year career with an 11:57 a.m. EST landing Wednesday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. STS-133 was the last mission for the longest-serving veteran of NASA's space shuttle fleet. Since 1984, Discovery flew 39 missions, spent 365 days in space, orbited Earth 5,830 times and traveled 148,221,675 miles.

"Discovery is an amazing spacecraft and she has served her country well," NASA Administrator Charles Bolden said. "The success of this mission and those that came before it is a testament to the diligence and determination of everyone who has worked on Discovery and the Space Shuttle Program, over these many years. As we celebrate the many accomplishments of this magnificent ship, we look forward to an exciting new era of human spaceflight that lies ahead."

Steve Lindsey commanded the flight and was joined by Pilot Eric Boe and Mission Specialists Alvin Drew, Steve Bowen, Michael Barratt and Nicole Stott. Discovery delivered the Pressurized Multipurpose Module, or PMM, which was converted from the Multipurpose Logistics Module, Leonardo. The PMM can host experiments in fluid physics, materials science, biology, biotechnology and other areas.

STS-133 also brought critical spare components and the Express Logistics Carrier 4 to the International Space Station. Robonaut 2, or R2, became the first human-like robot in space and a permanent resident of the station. The mission's two spacewalks assisted in outfitting the truss of the station and completed a variety of other tasks designed to upgrade station systems.

A welcome ceremony for the astronauts will be held Thursday, March 10, in Houston. The public is invited to attend the 4 p.m. CST event at Ellington Field's NASA Hangar 276. Gates to Ellington Field will open at 3:30 p.m.

Highlights from the ceremony will be broadcast on NASA Television's Video File. For NASA TV downlink information, schedules and links to streaming video, visit:

https://www.nasa.gov/ntv

STS-133 was the 133rd shuttle flight and the 35th shuttle mission dedicated to station assembly and maintenance. With Discovery and its crew safely home, the stage is set for the launch of shuttle Endeavour on its STS-134 mission, targeted to lift off on April 19.

Endeavour's flight will deliver the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS) to the space station. AMS will use the unique environment of space to advance knowledge of the universe, leading to a better understanding of the universe's origin by searching for antimatter, dark matter and strange matter, and by measuring cosmic rays.

The AMS will be attached to the outside of the station on the starboard truss. The device is expected to remain active for 10 or more years. Endeavour also will fly the Express Logistics Carrier 3, a platform that carries a number of spare parts that will sustain space station operations after the shuttles are retired from service.

For more information about the STS-133 mission and the upcoming STS-134 flight, visit:

https://www.nasa.gov/shuttle

For information about the space station, visit:

https://www.nasa.gov/station

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